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ON PAGE A-1

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AIR FORCE OFFICER SAID TO HAVE GIVEN RUSSIANS TITAN DATA

Military Officials Say That Codes
and Targets Required Change
After Visits to Embassy

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 31 — The Air Force missile officer accused of making unauthorized visits to the Soviet Embassy here gave Soviet diplomats information about Titan missiles that was sensitive enough to require the Air Force to change targets, codes and other systems, according to military officials.

Those officials said that Second Lieut. Christopher M. Cooke, who has been confined at McConnell Air Force Base, near Wichita, Kan., copied or possibly photographed the sensitive material and passed it to Soviet officials on the second of three visits he made to the embassy from December 1980 to May 1981.

Lieutenant Cooke's motives were not entirely clear, the officials said, and they believe that he has held back in discussing his reasons with Air Force investigators. But they said the officer's primary motive, from what the investigation has yielded so far, was to establish his credentials with Soviet diplomats in an effort to gain their trust and to obtain information from them.

Article May Have Been Planned

The officials said Lieutenant Cooke led investigators to believe that he may have planned to write a scholarly article about nuclear arms or disarmament with information he might have gathered from Soviet sources. While a graduate student at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va., Lieutenant Cooke wrote a thesis for his master's degree entitled "United States Tactical Nuclear Doctrine: Developing a Capability."

Lieutenant Cooke was charged Friday with three counts of breaking an Air Force regulation that requires officers to report to their superiors any contacts they have with representatives of Communist nations. The penalty for each count upon conviction is up to two years in prison at hard labor, with a loss of pay and allowances and a less than honorable discharge.

Lieutenant Cooke's legal counsel, Capt. Francis W. Pedrotty, of Langley Air Force Base in Hampton, Va., could not be reached at home by telephone. Yesterday Captain Pedrotty said his client had been "cooperating fully" with the investigation "under promise of complete immunity."

But the military officials said today that the Air Force did not feel bound to honor an offer of immunity because the investigators contend that Lieutenant Cooke has not been cooperating fully.

The investigators had offered the lieutenant immunity, one official said, in an effort to determine how far he may have compromised the security of the Titan intercontinental ballistic missiles, which are aimed at Soviet installations. The official said the Air Force was more interested in limiting that damage to security than it was in prosecuting Lieutenant Cooke.

The military officials said that Lieutenant Cooke was also under investigation for a possible charge of espionage. But they noted that the espionage laws of the United States would require the Air Force to prove that the accused had actually intended to do harm to the nation. That motivation, they said, would be hard to prove in this case.

The officials said the information that the lieutenant, the deputy commander of a Titan crew based near McConnell, is accused of passing to the Russians concerned the United States' oldest nuclear missiles. But Titans are still a powerful part of the nuclear weapons arsenal, they said, and thus need to be protected.

They said that the changes that were required to restore the security to the more than 50 Titan missile sites were expensive, and were undertaken immediately after Lieutenant Cooke came under suspicion, although when that was done was not made clear.

The officials said that this was the first case in which anyone in a sensitive position dealing with strategic nuclear missiles was known to have approached Soviet diplomats. They said that in previous cases, the Russians had made the overtures.

The Air Force carefully screens all officers and enlisted-rank technicians in missile firing crews and anyone else who might have access to the missiles or information about them.

Questions about the screening process might be more important than what information Lieutenant Cooke gave the Soviet Union, the officials said.

They said Lieutenant Cooke, on his first visit to the Soviet Embassy, appeared not to have been taken seriously by Soviet diplomats. They said that the lieutenant had left a series of written questions for Embassy officials to answer.

On his second visit, these sources went on, Lieutenant Cooke took with him the materials, which the officials did not describe, to show the Soviet diplomats that he had access to important information about Titan missiles.